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IDB supportive of U.S. Latin America goals

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The Inter-American Development Bank is anxious to help the new U.S. administration reach its economic and social goals in Latin America, the bank's U.S. chief said Friday.

Speaking at a luncheon sponsored by the Amigos de las Americas, Miguel San Juan, the IDB's U.S. executive director, said the previous administration of George W. Bush and the new administration led by President Barack Obama take different approaches to reach the same goal in dealing with poverty in Latin America.

San Juan said the Bush administration believed a strong economy would help lift people out of poverty, while Obama believes in addressing poverty directly as a way to improve Latin American economies.

The IDB is the primary source of multilateral financing for sustainable economic and social development in Latin America and the Caribbean.

San Juan said the key topics on the agenda at the upcoming IDB board of governors meetings starting March 27 in Medellin, Colombia, will be addressing growing concerns about poverty levels in Latin America, the effects of climate change and how to prevent major criminal activity from spreading, such as the eruption in crime related to drug-trafficking activity in Mexico.

San Juan, who took over his current post in July 2008, was previously senior vice president in the business development division of the Greater Houston Partnership, and also served on the Amigos international board. Amigos is a nonprofit organization that provides service opportunities for youths while directly impacting communities nationwide and in other countries.

"I enjoyed my time serving on the international board of directors of Amigos. I've said many times that Amigos is the best-kept secret in Houston," he said. "Amigos and the IDB have the shared mission of encouraging community development in Latin America."

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